

All Humanity is Grist To Mill Of Famous Humorist

HOWARD MILHOLLAND, famous American entertainer, at present on a tour of the Dominion, told the "Record's" Dunedin representative of his professional ideals in a special interview last week.

"As a specialist," he said, "I work to combine music with the spoken word. I have found this to be a delectable, if somewhat difficult study, in which a great share of the arrangement and presentation is carried by my partner, Miss Garcia. In fact, this marriage of words and music is essentially a matter for collaboration, involving careful analysis and meticulous preparation in arrangement, timing, and interpretation of both words and music.

"There must be no sacrifice on either side, and an abundance of imagination on both. The mood and colour of the music must exactly match that of the verse. There must be no straining on the part of one to reach the other. Neither can the indiscriminating cutting of music or verse be tolerated.

"Here is an example: Schubert wrote a fine musical interpretation of Goethe's 'Erl King.' Liszt, in turn, composed a musical transcription for the piano, taking great care to preserve faithfully the original Schubert song as you have heard it sung by Schumann, Heineke or Peter Dawson. On the other hand, there are many excellent translations of the poem, notably one by Sir Walter Scott.

"**W**HEN these words are recited, dramatising the characters of the Father, the Son and Death, the story becomes more intelligible to the listener: no music is spoiled, the Liszt transcription being in itself a work of art, and many people really understand the story for the first time.

"Don Blanding's 'Vagabond House,' which I recited from 4ZB, called for quite different treatment. In this number we used the best moving-picture technique, which, by the way, originated in the radio search for a suitable means and style of combining music and text.

"It is all a matter of heightening the emotional appeal. Taken separately, the emotional plane of prose is lower than that of verse, verse in turn than music: while verse and music combined are normally higher than either could be alone, as each interprets the other; that is, when they are joined in a true union of mood and colour."

ASKED if he had any real preference for a particular character, Mr. Milholland replied: "I am interested in anything that presents life as it is; that can be interpreted to make something worth while. Humour, drama, enlightenment, a message—anything at all of

merit. I have studied many characters, negro, Irish, Jewish, etc., but most of all I enjoy old men, the 'hick' or aged American rustic. Or, better still, the kindly old man like the French-Canadian in William Henry Drummond's 'Leetle Bateeste.' There was, however, one poem which influenced my life, 'The Night Wind,' by Eugene Field. It was my first real success, and strongly influenced my decision to adopt my present career."

MR. MILHOLLAND had some interesting remarks to make on music and education. "Music," he said, "plays an important part in the education systems of the high schools and colleges in the United States. Students are gathered in auditoria fitted with stages and sound and lighting effects, and professional talent appears to entertain them.

"These appearances serve a dual purpose. They are both entertaining and educational, and give the students an incentive to attain proficiency in their chosen vocation similar to that of the artists. So popular have these appearances become that there have been inaugurated student bodies which collect funds from the colleges and then prepare programmes and negotiate with talent for their presentation. The auditoria, incidentally, are used for football, baseball and athletic talks besides the numerous gatherings which form part of the schools' curricula."

DURING his stay in Dunedin Mr. Milholland visited the University of Otago and various leading schools, endeavouring to arouse a similar interest in such a system. He himself has frequently participated in small concerts at the American schools, and he should undoubtedly be in a position to give good advice.

Mr. Milholland was asked what he thought of Commercial broadcasting in New Zealand. He replied that he had found the personnel of the ZB stations exemplifying the friendliness, culture and refinement all radio organisations should possess. He had noticed a great endeavour on the part of those producing programmes to achieve real entertainment.

He expressed pleasure at the receptions he and his colleague had received in New Zealand.

"Audiences," he said, "want to know who you are, and what you have done, and desire to become fully acquainted with you. Then they show much more enthusiasm than in the United States; they display the utmost friendliness."

But Howard Milholland must have been sadly disappointed with his reception in Dunedin. Two concerts staged in the Octagon Theatre realised but a handful of people, yet there is no question that the presentations given by these two very talented artists were of a quality rarely reached in the south.

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